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ABSTRACT

The importance of a good listening program in the upper-elementary grades was emphasized. Perhaps the biggest listening problem with these students, the author said, is to teach them to read as they listen. Suggestions were offered as to how to build listening skills. The separate communicative skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing need to be taught, but it should be recognized that development in one skill reinforces another and that communications skills should be taught by discovery, practice, evaluation, and more practice. Examples of creative listening activities were also given. (NH)

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LISTENING: UPPER ELEMENTARY GRADES

A teacher spoke directly to other teachers. She had as her theme, listening is reading. She believed in what she was saying, and she used a teacher's language as she staccatoed her points.

Besides being an era of behavioral objective, assessment and evaluation, this is also an era of telelecture thus listening; this is an era of ITV, thus viewing and listening; this is an era of the voice activated response system or talk backs thus listening; this is an era of cassette recorder's individualized talking and listening; this is an era of the dial access system with listening, and if we can believe, the modern day soothsayers, soon we won't need to be able to read the printed page because we will be able to listen and assimilate so much faster -- so perhaps our biggest listening problem in the upper elementary grades is to teacheour youngsters to read as they listen.

"Did you read me?" the policeman radioes. The engineer querries, "Did you read me, Jo?", as he makes announcements over a three way radio -- and he receives a negative or affirmative answer in a communicative lingo that they all comprehend.

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This then is a listening world our youngsters are growing up in and maybe growing up unprepared.

It can also be argued that we as teachers need to learn to listen, and if we listen to our youngsters speak out, listen to our youngsters cry aloud or sob softly and throw out questionable questions, we'll find out that the children know what they like to listen to; and some of them do in actuality know only that which they've heard.

When a child says, "I enjoyed listening during that social studies period," we need to determine the Why and thus develop better, more interesting listening activities that satisfy. A child who remarks, "I liked that stuff", has learned. He listens like us to that which he comprehends and is interested. Maybe then too many of our listening activities are like reading activities, they're drab, repretitive listening routines for fifteen minute intervals at the individual modern study booth, or at an electronic listening center in an Aqua-Doored school. The equipment becomes the thing instead of the child.

Ask youngsters why they need to listen and you get down-to-earth reasons for listening on which to base lessons. Ask then how you can tell when someone is listening, and you'll realize they're keenly aware that adults sometimes don't listen. Sometimes, adulthood is a Hood of speaking instead of a Hood of listening.

One excellent start in building listening skills is to read a story, a story with a moral, a story with suspense and ask the students to write one good word that describes the message. This is not an easy exercise, but students must think and must listen as they react.

These words can then be written on a chalkboard. The students will become word conscious. The teacher and students may have a good Talk About or dialogue as to why a word was chosen. This word writing and Talk About can be followed with making a thesis statement. Then ask the students to write their sentences of detail to prove this statement. In other words, the possibilities are limitless.

This kind of technique means that we believe our job is to provide instruction in the separate communicative skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing and at the same time recognize that development in one skill reinforces another, and also recognize that communicative skills should be taught by discovery, practice, evaluation and more practice.

After much work with words and phrases, listening skills can be escalated by such a simple technique as reading a short essay. Have the students listen and write mentally one good sentence that gives the message of the essay. This might be called precis writing. If transparencies can be used to illustrate the essay, the learning will be hastened.

Of course this kind of lesson means that the teacher sees first the importance of all communication skills and knows this is a world of communication; second the teacher is interested in developing interrelated lessons to meet the youngsters requirements in a listening, speaking world, and third the teacher knows how to have class work, group work and true individualized work -- not seat word for all -- the type where the students are all doing the same activity, <u>individually that is</u>.

Teachers can develop a classroom, or school listening tape program. They can make their own tapes for specific listening skills, and these tapes can be used in group work or individual work. It is better to have a listening station research points out, -- but if a listening station isn't available the youngsters can listen at a tape recorder in a small group or individually.

If youngsters cannot listen for details, can they be expected to read for details? Youngsters will listen more effectively and read better if the listening - reading is correlated. A tape can be as simple as, a teacher reading two paragraphs on a tape and asking eight questions concerning details and giving the answers. Thus a lesson is programmed to meet particular needs. Older and talented students can make tapes for the program. These tapes can be filed according to skills, listening to direction, listening for information, listening to evaluate, to listening to

criticize. If teachers start a tape library, -- they will find that neighbors, friends, husband, boyfriend, wife, girlfriend, all will help make tapes.

The teacher is always mindful of two factors: listening is a part of the total reading or language arts program and cannot be neglected but as individual help in one particular skill is needed individual help is given. Teachers may even need to define what individualization means.

In this classroom tape library, lectures, music, drama productions, and games can be taped to develop understanding, appreciation, enjoyment, or critical analysis. Civic, patriotic or technical talks can be taped to give information. Members of the class can present monologues, dialogues, plays or dramatizations to develop interpretation or creative listening.

A teacher can become a creative teacher, even if principals don't like creative teachers and teachers don't like creative students. Teachers can, if they want, teach creative listening. If listening is to be a part of our total creative program, the attitude of the teacher and student is different. The youngster knows he can express an opinion; the opinion will be listened to by his peers and by his teacher without wrath descending. The youngster respects and listens to opinions of his classmates. Here, maybe for the first time in his life, he can inhale and exhale creatively. He may not be allowed to do this at home or even at church.

A challenge looms in the creative room. Bill's best is really not good enough. Everyone knows he must contribute something worthwhile to the class. This takes some doing, because no longer does the teacher have 30 minutes of reading everday, $18\frac{1}{2}$ minutes of writing at such and such a time, nor does the teacher decide to be on page 171 by Christmas, and page 286 by June. This change of attitude is perhaps the hardest thing to come by. Sometimes educators are died-in-the-wool traditionalists.

Will not all teachers agree that if we sit down and analyze some class activities, there was little individual thinking required? The youngsters merely parroted back answers to what they had read or listened to. Educators often ask for indivi-

dualists, for free thinkers, and then squash Bill daily with, "I don't care what you think, what does it say in the book?"

Creative listening activities brings teaching alive, and rare experiences take place that the youngsters can tell their great-great grandchildren about -- that is, if they've learned to listen and talk. For instance, I once saw a creative teacher make up a good listening activity out of what could have been a classroom dilemma. The city street department was drilling and tearing up the street right outside his window. You know, the street department had had a beautiful summer to finish this, but no, they chose a rainy November after school had started. But this teacher didn't pull his hair, run to the principal or the counselor or his favorite couch doctor. He said to the class, "Let's listen to the rain on the window, let's listen to the sounds outside for ten minutes and write about what we hear." This, then is creative learning taking place.

In a creative listening program, youngsters listen to sounds, they listen to sparkling words, they listen to unique phrasing, they listen to sentences, they listen to paragraphs, and they react by speaking or writing. But a teacher who forgets creative listening activities in his classroom is already a failure. Of course, creative listening is not limited to literature. Students may listen to a partial solution of a problem -- can they resolve a better one? Creative listening can and should become a part of living.

Teachers also need to develop critical listening programs. Americans are the most gullible people in the world. They let the press swing them in favor of a personality - male or female. They swallow in one swallow a politician's promise. Good listening lessons can be developed around political speeches, and advertising on TV. Since TV is with us, let's use TV. Exactly in one-two-three order why did the speaker say that he favored a higher income tax? How did he criticize the legislature? Exactly, what did he say? As a warning, teachers should not listen and evaluate according to their <u>own</u> <u>beliefs</u>.

One class I visited used black, red, and white cards - and as a student discussed what a speaker said - the other students used cards as a go sign or a stop sign. If one student put words in the speaker's mouth, the students put up their black cards.

One student explained, "We hold up a black card if the critical analysis is prejudiced; a white card if the thinking is clear and a red card if the thinking should be reconsidered. This card idea really helps our listening."

A developmental listening program should be defined at any school. Teachers should know what listening skills to be working on - as they build toward one time listening and learning. In one school wherein listening received a proportionate share of the Language Arts Program, the teachers listed skills and techniques. They also developed lessons and exchanged them. They had such lessons as Listening for Mood.

One lesson consisted of ten sentences. The youngsters listened and wrote down whether each sentence depicted a happy or a sad mood. Then the next step was to reread the sentences and let the students write the sentences as they listened. Next the students discussed how well they did on sentence 1 in comparison with sentence 10. Finally, they discussed whether or not "Listening can be improved."

Another listening lesson was to have the students listen to columns from newspapers to determine the tone. Was the tone racy, humorous, serious, or a research tone? What words determined the tone? What phrases determined the tone? Then the students read the column and had a discussion. Were they wrong? How right were they? How well had they listened?

Teachers can also make use of listening charts. For instance, the youngsters will have a chart that maybe lists six specifics for which he is to listen, or they are to list the three main points of the speech, or they may be asked, "What three social programs did the speaker promise to his listeners"? The students thus develop a plan for listening, and can become organized listeners and organized thinkers and speakers. Development of organizational thinking cannot help but develop organized

thinking when reading.

The students need to learn also why listening is important and thus change attitudes toward listening as a skill, and become interested in learning to listen. They may understand their listening problems as mental passiveness, lack of concentration, gathering details instead of ideas, being unable to follow speaker's organization, allowing mannerisms, voice, or enunciation to distract, or not being able to follow vocabulary.

Sometimes informal inventories much like reading inventories should be given and will change student attitudes toward listening. Youngsters can be given such questions as these to answer <u>yes</u> or <u>no</u>.

___ ___ 1. Does teacher ever have to repeat assignments to you?

___ ___ 2. Does Dad ever have to tell you the second time to do your jobs?

___ ___ 3. Do you ever have to ask what announcement the principal made?

___ ___ 4. Do you forget what your Sunday school teacher said last Sunday?

___ ___ 5. Do you miss some of the announcements the teacher makes?

___ ___ 6. Do you sometimes miss hearing mother when she calls for you to come in from play?

___ ___ 7. Do you miss many of the words in songs you hear?

___ ___ 8. Do you daydream while all the other students read?

Then a discussion can be held and maybe the conclusion drawn that if you have any <u>yes</u> answers, you need to improve your listening. The assignment could even be to: Take the ten questions home to your mother and father. Ask them if they would like to improve their listening.

Remember, this is a listening, speaking, automated world -- and one of our jobs as teachers is not only to be a good listener ourselves, but to make our students better and more effective listeners.